

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Q & As

THE NEBRASKA CENTRAL BASINS RESOURCES PROJECT CREP

1. What is the Nebraska Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program?

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program or CREP (pronounced "Krep") is a Federal-State natural resource conservation program targeted to address State and nationally significant agricultural-related environmental problems. Through CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10 to 15 years. Participants remove cropland or marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees, and other vegetation. The CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

2. What are the goals of the Nebraska Central Basins CREP?

The Nebraska Central Basins CREP will help farmers improve the water quality of the designated rivers and streams by reducing sediment and agricultural chemical runoff. Through CREP, Nebraska farmers may voluntarily enroll eligible acreage that will improve the environment and wildlife.

3. What areas in Nebraska are included in the program?

Producers can offer eligible cropland and marginal pastureland in 37 central and eastern Nebraska counties. Contact your local USDA Service Center for specific information concerning your eligibility for CREP.

4. What are the goals of the Nebraska Central Basins CREP?

The goals of the Nebraska CREP are to:

- Improve water quality of the designated streams and rivers by installing 100,000 acres of filter strips, riparian buffers, native and other grasses, wetlands, and wildlife habitat practices.
- Enhance and create wildlife habitat.

5. What conservation measures are applicable?

To better serve program goals, specific CRP conservation practices have been identified for inclusion in the program. The practices are:

CP1, Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes

CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses

CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat

CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife

CP21, Filter Strips

CP22, Riparian Buffer

CP23, Wetland Restoration.

6. Who can sign up for the Nebraska Central Basins CREP and for how long?

Enrollment will be on a continuous basis beginning January 21, 2003. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as an eligible riparian buffer. Persons who have an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are not eligible for CREP until that contract expires. Contract periods are from 10 to 15 years.

7. What are the payments under CREP?

Generally, CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of USDA payments:

- **Signing Incentive Payment:** A one-time payment of \$100 per acre for land enrolled in a riparian forest buffer or grass filter strip practice. This payment is made soon after the contract has been signed and approved.
- **Practice Incentive Payment:** A one-time payment equal to about 40 percent of the eligible cost for establishing the riparian buffer, filter strip or shallow water area for wildlife. This payment is in addition to up to 50 percent cost-share assistance that USDA will provide for installing eligible practices.
- **Annual Rental Payment for the Life of the contract:** Payments at the normal rate, plus an incentive payment of 20 percent of the calculated soil rental rate for cropland for most Central Basins CREP practices. For filter strips or riparian buffers, the payments are at the normal rate, plus an incentive of 50 percent of the calculated cropland or marginal pastureland rental rate not to exceed \$150 per acre.
- **Cost-Share Assistance:** Assistance up to 50 percent for the installation of the eligible conservation practices on enrolled land.
- **Annual Maintenance Payment:** A payment in accordance with Handbook 2-CRP procedure.

In addition, Nebraska will offer the following payments:

- A one-time State incentive payment equal to \$100 per "resource corner area" as defined in the Memorandum of Agreement (Agreement) enrolled.
- A one-time State incentive payment equal to \$100 provided all four "resource corner areas" of a field are enrolled.
- Cost-share payments to participants of the eligible costs for the establishment of approved practices.

Further details will be available. Producers should contact their local FSA office to obtain and read the program contract information before making a decision to enroll.

8. What is the cost of the Nebraska Central Basins CREP?

Based on the initial implementation of the Nebraska Central Basins CREP, which projects an enrollment of 100,000 acres, the expected combined financial Federal and State obligation will be approximately \$209 million. Of that amount, \$143 million will come from USDA and \$66 million from the State and private sources. This does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers. USDA's share of the total program costs is approximately 68 percent and Nebraska's share is approximately 32 percent.

9. Can I still enroll in general CRP and continuous sign-up CRP?

Yes. CREP is another option under the CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll eligible land in the regular general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous sign-up. The CREP enrollment process is on a continuous basis and payments are at a higher effective rate.

10. Can I hay or graze my CREP land?

Haying and grazing is currently permitted during the CRP contract period. Under certain practices for managed haying and grazing or emergency haying and grazing under normal CRP rules.

11. Where can I get more information about the program?

Contact the Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service office within your local USDA Service Center or your local Natural Resources District (NRD). Additional information is also available on FSA's Web site: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.